



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.3543 | FAX (517) 373.0927

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hammerstrom/

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Contact: Amy Zaagman
1-888-477-8238

Legislature sends groundbreaking water protection plan to governor

LANSING –Legislation that would provide groundbreaking comprehensive plans to protect Michigan’s waters was sent to the governor today, announced Senator Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance.

“This legislation is a positive step forward in protecting Michigan’s groundwater supply,” Hammerstrom said. “By passing this legislation, we are continuing our commitment to preserving one of our state’s most precious resources.”

Senate Bills 850-852, 854 and 857 create new standards for water withdrawals and permit programs for water users to help them avoid adverse impacts on the environment.

The package will:

- Strengthen the current prohibition against water diversion by requiring legislative oversight;
- Put in place a system to manage significant new water withdrawals that have the potential to impact our water and water-dependent natural resources;
- Implement an interim standard that will provide protections for key designated trout streams by defining critical zones around the streams;
- Develop an easy-to-use model to replace the interim standard that will allow a user to click on a map and determine if water use will cause an adverse impact;
- Establish a permitting program for water bottling operations. This will ensure waters used for this purpose do not impact our water dependent natural resources;

(More)

- Authorize the creation of groups of water users to work with the DEQ in crafting water plans that resolve water use problems before adverse impacts occur; and
- Require businesses that use our water to propose water use conservation measures.

The issue of groundwater withdrawals was one of many concerns heard by the Senate Great Lakes Conservation Task Force. The task force held eight hearings throughout the state in 2001 to gather information in regard to water quality issues in the Great Lakes. In 2002, the bi-partisan task force issued its findings and recommendations in a report entitled “The Citizens’ Agenda...An Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes.”

“As vice chair of the Senate Great Lakes Conservation Task Force, I had the opportunity to listen to the people of this state and hear their concerns about this issue,” Hammerstrom said. “I believe this legislation successfully addresses their concerns.”

In the report’s executive summary, it was noted, “The Great Lakes define the state of Michigan and its people. We live, work, and recreate on and around the lakes, and the care and safeguarding of this critical natural resource has been an ongoing responsibility for all the citizens of the state.”

A copy of “The Citizens’ Agenda...An Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes” is available at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hammerstrom.

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